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King Death Prober Says Data Destroyed

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Robert Ozer, a House Assassination Committee staff lawyer, said documents relating to the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. were destroyed since the panel was created this fall.

Richard A. Sprague, chief counsel for the 11-member panel, said he could not elaborate because an investigation was not complete.

Sprague said the committee planned to vote on whether to subpoena documents relating to the assassinations of King and President John F. Kennedy.

He said the committee, which is forming a task force to conduct the inquiry, had asked the Justice Department and U. S. intelligence agencies for all the evidence they have on the killings.

Chairman Thomas N. Downing, D-Va., said the committee had notified all agencies concerned that the panel wanted all documents and memoranda on both the King and Kennedy assassinations and that it would be "a willful violation of our request" if anything were destroyed.

During yesterday session, Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, D-Tex., asked Ozer: "Were any document destroyed since the committee was constituted?"

"Yes sir," Ozer replied. "I believe some documents were destroyed."

After persistant questioning, Sprague said "They are documents we felt relevent to the investigation of the King assassination and that would have been in the possession of law enforcing agencies." He would not say whether the law enforcement agencies concerned were federal or local.

In September, Memphis Mayor Wyeth Chandler revealed he had ordered the destruction of his police department's domestic intelligence files, some dating back to 1965.

Police Chief W. O. Crumby said they included groups and individuals considered threats to government officials and they would have covered some investigative work dealing with the King assassination. It was not known whether this was the destruction Ozer mentioned.

Earlier, with reporters and some members of the public present, slides were projected on a screen including a picture of King's body at the Memphis morgue, a gaping wound in his neck. Sprague said it was caused by an expanding bullet fired from a Remington rifle.

The rifle, with a telescopic sight, was found almost immediately after King was killed while leaning over a balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tenn. April 4, 1968.